

Evidence for circular construction

Track retained materials, reuse and waste outcomes without overstating the benefits.

Version 1.0 | Published and reviewed: 9 September 2026 | 5-minute read

Status: Recommended practice; waste law, planning and contracts create specific duties.

Audience: Developers, contractors and material suppliers; design, procurement and reporting leads.

Executive summary

Circular construction starts with reducing material demand and keeping useful buildings and products in service. Recycling follows consideration of prevention and reuse.^[1] Good reporting traces materials to their confirmed destinations and separates planned outcomes from achieved results. Technical suitability, waste status and carbon performance are different questions. Agree the evidence before design and procurement decisions, then record what happens through construction and handover. A material register should show what was retained, transferred or discarded, and the basis for each reported outcome.

Start here. Choose one material stream and trace its quantity, condition, proposed destination, technical approval and actual outcome from survey to handover.

In plain terms. Circularity preserves useful materials and their value. A reused door remains a door; recycling turns material into a new substance or product. Preparing discarded items for reuse is a waste-management activity. These distinctions affect the lawful route and the description of the outcome.^{[1][2]}

Measure the route actually taken

Outcome	Recommended evidence
Retained in place	Survey, design decision and installed quantities kept in use.
Reused elsewhere	Item identity, condition, acceptance and confirmed receiving project.
Recycled	Material classification, measured quantity and confirmed processing route.
Other recovery or disposal	Destination, treatment route and supporting waste records; report separately.

Check the rules and technical acceptance

In England and Wales, businesses controlling waste must meet waste duty-of-care requirements. Check carriers and facilities, describe waste accurately and keep transfer records. A reuse intention does not remove controls: establish waste status and required permits or exemptions. Scotland and Northern Ireland have separate guidance.^[2]

Planning and contracts can add evidence requirements. London Plan Policy SI 7 requires a Circular Economy Statement for applications referable to the Mayor; boroughs may apply lower thresholds.^[3] Confirm the applicable planning route; the London requirement is not UK-wide.

A recovery percentage does not establish carbon savings. Compare equivalent function and study periods, including transport, processing and replacement. The Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) whole-life method reports potential benefits beyond the boundary separately in Module D, without deducting them from the main total.^[4] Obtain separate technical acceptance for the intended use.

Recommended actions

Suggested owners, timing and evidence for the next steps:

1. **Set the decision brief.** Confirm planning and contract requirements, then consider retention and reduced material demand. Keep the option appraisal, scope, measurement basis and the reasons for the chosen approach. *Client and design lead, before design approval.*
2. **Identify reusable items.** Record quantities, dimensions, condition and evidence of performance. Obtain the appropriate specialist acceptance and identify testing, storage or refurbishment needed before promising a reuse outcome. *Survey and technical leads, before procurement.*
3. **Secure the destination.** Confirm receiving parties, specifications, logistics and lawful waste arrangements where applicable. Keep agreements and contingency routes so a planned transfer is not reported as completed reuse. *Procurement and site leads, before movement.*
4. **Reconcile material flows.** Track purchases, retained items, reuse, waste and remaining stock using consistent units. Reconcile estimated volumes to measured weights where needed, recording conversion assumptions and destination evidence. *Site reporting lead, during delivery.*
5. **Report achieved outcomes.** Separate targets from actual quantities and distinguish reuse, recycling, other recovery and disposal. Keep the technical approvals, material register and carbon-assessment assumptions available for the client's review. *Project manager, at handover.*

Example in practice

Illustrative example: 100 doors are surveyed; 60 are accepted and installed for reuse, 25 go to confirmed recycling and 15 to disposal. Reuse is 60% by item count, not 85%. These figures do not establish weight percentages or carbon savings without additional data.

Common mistakes and what to do instead

- Calling all landfill diversion recycling: distinguish reuse, recycling and other recovery.
- Counting an advertised item as reused: require evidence of acceptance and actual use.
- Treating a carbon result as technical approval: obtain the separate suitability decision.

How Reinventives can help

Reinventives can establish the material evidence register, reporting definitions, ownership and reconciliation process for a project or supplier programme. A useful first output is a review of one material stream from source to destination. We coordinate qualified waste, engineering and lifecycle-assessment specialists for legal status, technical acceptance and formal assessment.

Book a construction reporting conversation: reinventives.co.uk/construction/book

Related briefing notes: [BN004 Whole-life carbon](#) | [BN005 Embodied carbon](#) | [BN006 EPDs](#)

Sources and review dates

- [1] Defra, Guidance on applying the Waste Hierarchy, June 2011, sections 1 and 3.
[2] Defra / Environment Agency, Waste duty of care code, November 2018, sections 2-4; England and Wales.
[3] Greater London Authority, Circular Economy Monitoring 2022, May 2024, pages 3 and 6; Policy SI 7 B-C.
[4] RICS, Whole life carbon assessment, second edition, version 3, August 2024; boundaries and Module D.

Correct as of and sources accessed 9 September 2026 | Next review 9 March 2027

Review earlier when waste rules, local planning policy, RICS guidance or the project's material acceptance criteria change.

This briefing is general information, not legal, procurement, engineering or assurance advice. Requirements should be checked for the specific organisation, project and contract.